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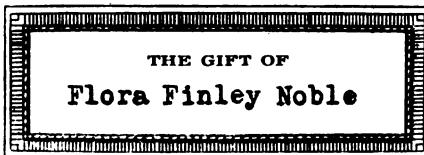
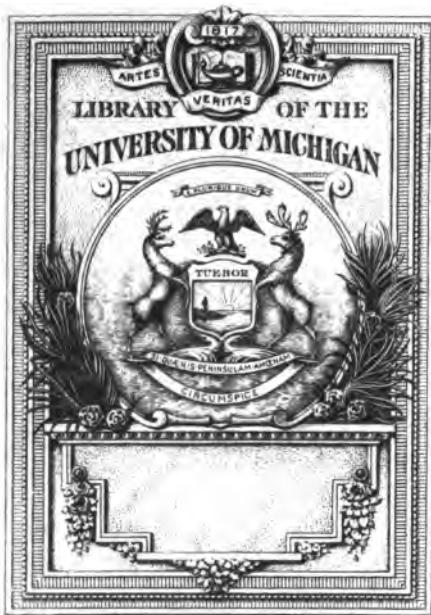
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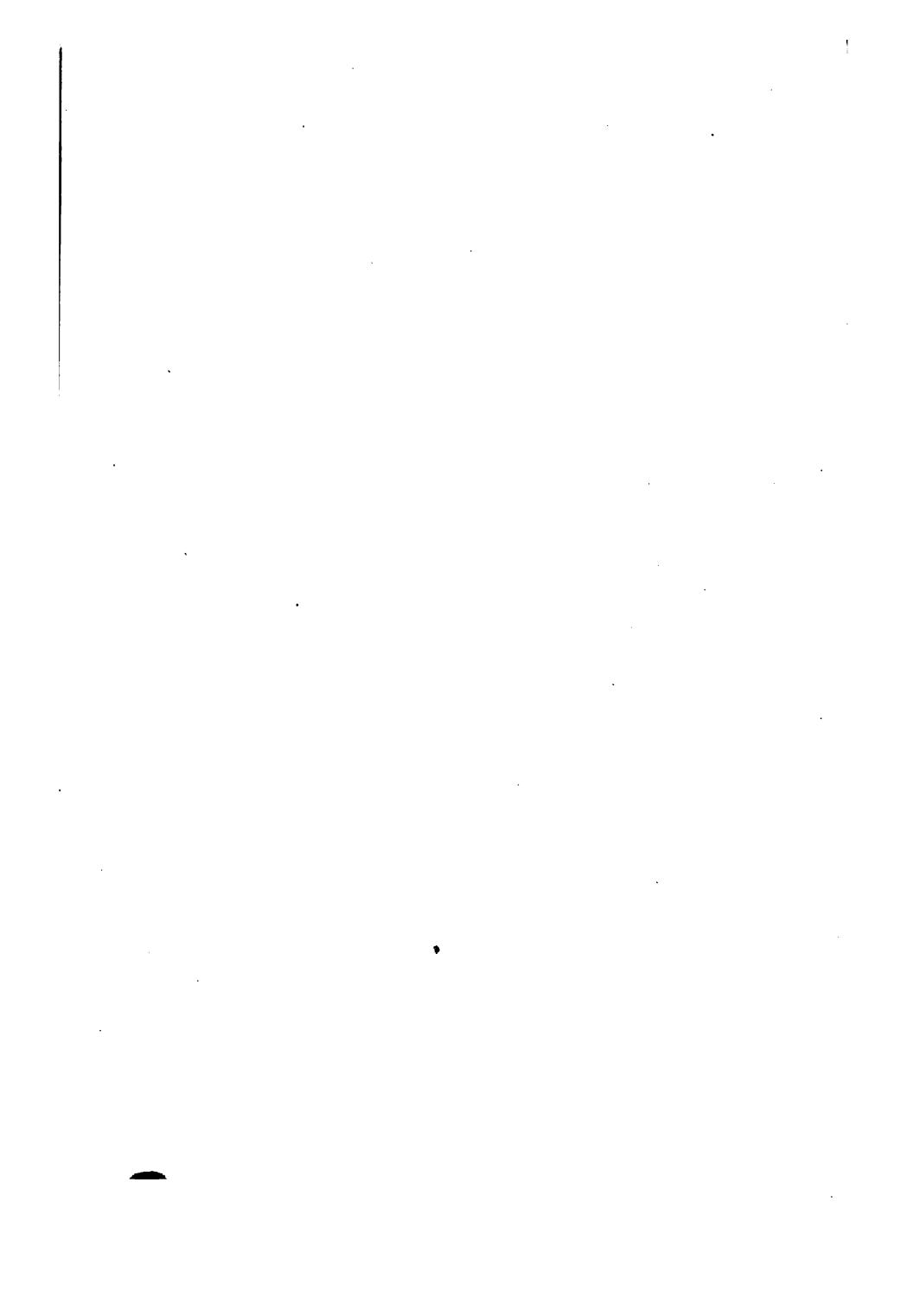
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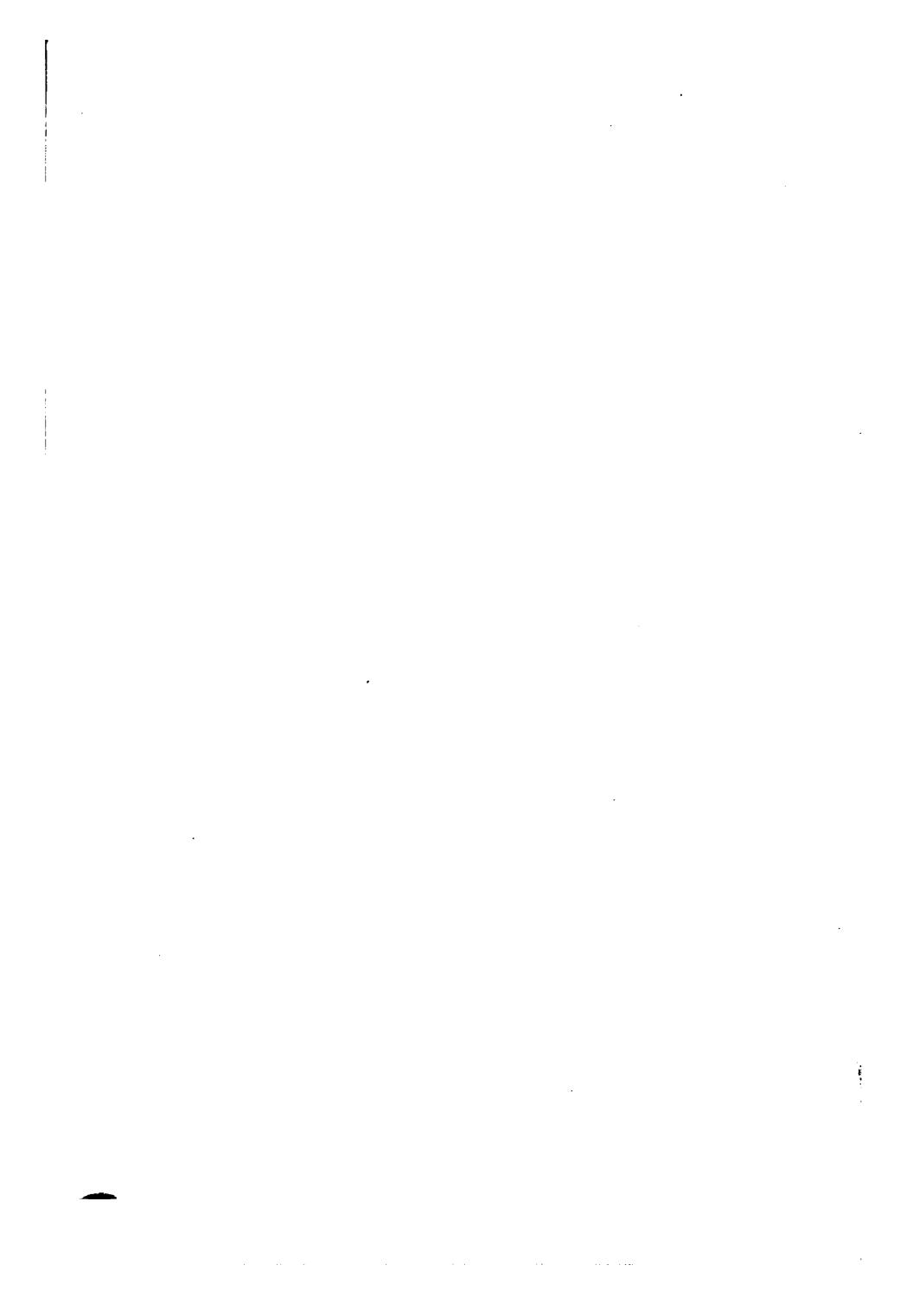


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The Shepherd's Question



The Shepherd's Question

By
Burt Estes Howard



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When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy
fingers,
The moon and the stars which thou hast or-
dained;
What is man that thou art mindful of him ?
And the son of man that thou visitest him ?

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YING out under the Syrian skies, where the great watch-stars burn-ed like night-lamps which Jehovah had lighted and swung there in the dusky dome, that his children might not be fearful in the dark; looking with wistful eyes into the somber deeps, where, as the sun went down, the Spirit of Vastness seemed to bend over the earth and fold all men and things in its shadowy bosom, the Shepherd-poet, with the infinite faith of a little child, "prattles of his tiny life

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to the Creator of the ends of the earth,"
and sings into speech the music that
croons in his soul.

Not in the garish day, when the light reveals the myriad bars of our prison-house and the fettering meshes of life's multitudinous business; but in the night when the sound of the conflict has ceased and the hearts of men are still; when the eyes are no longer filled with the dust of strife nor the ears with the rumble of traffic in the streets; in the night, when the souls of men are freed for a season and the gates are open in the Garden of Dreams; the thoughts of men grow large and holy, the skies melt into the shadow-veiled face of the Infinite, the Mysteries of Life take shape and God walketh on the wings of the wind. It is the time when we grow honest with ourselves, and the unfaith with-

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in us dies. It is the time when we grow greater than ourselves, and "Life, like the hand of God, sweeps across the spirit we call our own, and strokes from the strings the strange, unwilling songs that sleep within."

It is in the day that faith wanes,—in the day, when the things of sense obtrude themselves and life is hidden by the chaff and the husks of the material. We build our atheisms out of the things we see. But when night is come, and life's littleness sinks into the vastness of the overshadowing quiet; and the earth, lifted into the hush of infinite peace, is no longer a prodigal planet, drunken with the riot of sense and mad with the greed of the market; when the glamour of day has faded and the darkness has hidden the signs of our mortality, then does the soul come to itself

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and remember its Father's House.

It was only a lad, the first of the Bethlehem shepherds, singing there in the starlight amid the hills, and finding his God in the night, but the yearning ages have caught up the song, and the men of every clime have gone God-seeking, with something of the same child-wonderment and child-faith in their hearts. With a boy's artless confidence that never stops to question, David believed that God walked in the shadows of those Syrian hills and listened while he sang. And when, by and by, he laid down his crook to take up the scepter, the breath of the fields and the dew followed David into the king's palaces. "The old boy-prayers — the outdoor ones — with the night-wind in them, and the sleep of lambs and the awe of the sky, and the nestling com-

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union of a child, he never outgrew. Even through the sturdier ones, to be sung with the clash of shields and the voice of armies, there is something that steals from these, — David is always a shepherd-boy when he prays. With the child-beauty he stamps forever the relation of man to God." In the long years afterward, when life, — the life that the day brings, — grew troubled and full of bitterness, the king's heart turned back to the old memories and the old trust, and he sought God again where he had found him as a boy, — not in the dim aisles of the temple, but under the open skies :

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills
From whence cometh my help:
My help cometh from the Lord,
Which made heaven and earth.

He looked for God at the old trysting-

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place. The king would steal away from the pomp and glitter of royalty to become, for a little, a bit of a shepherd lad, alone with his father's flocks upon the upland meadows,—alone with the flocks and God. Foolish, think you, this wandering back to faith's simplicity and the trust of a little child? It is never foolish to return to those points in our experience where we have met our moral uplifts. The rush of life may have carried us far afield, the moments in the mount may lie leagues on leagues behind us, the way may have crawled wearily across the desert waste, but the soul gets a new strength always in remembering life's high places.

It was not a new question that the young shepherd asked that night, as, gazing with wide eyes into the shadowy heavens, the meagerness of his life

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seemed to shrivel up against the immensity of him who created the firmament and set the stars in their places.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;
What is man that thou art mindful of him ?
And the son of man that thou visitest him ?

Many a soul has tried to span the gap that stretches its immeasurable expanse between the God of the universe and the infinitesimal life of man. To each of us comes, at some time or other, the old mystery of God's thought for his creature, and a musing wonder about it all.

We are blinded by the light of our own knowledge. The faith of the child withers as the reason of the man grows, and the harmonies of life are broken.

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The little white-robed figure, kneeling in the dusk by his bedside, babbles his lisping prayers to the Father-God, and is fretted by no doubts. His world is a tiny world — just as big as the baby mind, but to him it is a real world and he interprets the universe in symbols of his own home. Father is father to him, whether spelled with a capital "F" or a small "f." But knowledge brings disillusion, and there comes a day to him when he sits amid the ruins of the world he had builded out of his child-
ish dreams; a day when the mind seizes the wanderer's staff and pushes out in-
to the infinite reaches of time and space, where thought grows dizzy and faith faints. Bewildered by the very vastness of the new-discovered universe, the soul dare cry no longer "Abba," "Father," but talks in the jargon of the schools

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about "Cosmic Forces" and a "First Cause." Foolish, perhaps, this feeling that fatherhood is dissipated as the thought of it is multiplied. Foolish, perhaps, to think that God is less our Father, because we have discovered suddenly how great he is. And yet most of us are haunted, now and again, by just this sense of utter homesickness and loneliness, as we find our way through the far-stretching corridors of the Father's house, looking wistfully for the door that shall let us into his presence.

In the old days, when this little earth of ours was thought of as the center of the universe, it was not so hard to realize the fatherhood of the God who was regarded as sitting upon the circle of the heavens, ruling worlds and men from his throne in the compact crystal dome of the ancients. But now, when

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not this earth alone, but the vast system of which it is only a fragment, these whirling planets, these suns and stars, separated by distances that stagger thought, are known to be not all of the universe, but scarcely more than a jewelled fringe upon the skirts of space; and when the idea of God sweeps on and on, trying to catch up with the conception of this limitless material expansion, we grow confused by the largeness of the terms with which we are vainly endeavoring to reason, and there is a grave danger that God shall be to us no more than a name,—a “Something that we name and cannot know.”

So the problem shapes itself: how shall we bridge the gulf between the finite and the Infinite? How shall we find our trembling way along the cosmos-tracks of God, till we see him face

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to face? Who shall lead us into the Eternal Presence? "O that I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" These human aphidæ that swarm for a brief day upon the stalk of life and then drop off, none knoweth whither, what are they to the Infinite, that he should be mindful of them? Such is the problem, and many of us, wearied with trying to solve it, give up the struggle and take refuge with the poet in a dumb resignation tinged with hope.

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the world's great altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Such is the problem. But it is only a

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seeming. We have been misled by the old, false dualism that would fence out God from his universe. We have been taught to conceive of God as something different from the great "Sum of Things"; as a sort of tinker in worlds, who made the system of created things and then withdrew into the impenetrable darkness. We have been led to believe in a distant, transcendent God, living somewhere outside the real of things and acting upon the world from without. So we have gone crying after him, saying, "Who shall ascend into the heavens to bring him down to us, or who shall descend into the abyss to bring him up?" When lo, the Word is nigh us, even in our hearts.

There is no problem. The soul is called upon to make no weary journeying to the seat of God. No bridge is needed to

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span the gulf between the finite and the Infinite. Where there is no gulf there need be no bridge.

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is and God the soul.”

There may be a sense of separation between the man and God, but there can be no separation in fact. For man, with all that is, is part of him who fill-eth all things. Man is because God is. The finite is not something different from the Infinite. The finite presup-poses the Infinite, as the part presup-poses the whole. Cuvier could take a single scale and construct therefrom the fish from which it came. The whole is involved in the least of its parts. So does the finite imply an Infinite, and a God is prophesied in every living soul. All Nature is but a divine utterance, and every birth is an incarnation.

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“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” So runs the story in an ancient scroll; and men, reading the venerable tale, have thought of a Master-builder at work, world-making, with tools and implements, a divine architect, fashioning a universe from without, a workmanlike unto ourselves. Not so were the worlds brought forth. God has *lived out* the worlds and all the things that are in the worlds. In him, we, and all that is, live and move and have our being. He is at the very heart of things, soul of their soul. The universe is not something apart from God; it *is* God, spelling himself out in visible form. Nothing exists without him, for nothing exists that is not part of him. He is the source and the final goal of all things. As the rivers spring from the sea, and find their rest at last

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upon its bosom, so the streams of life proceed from God and return again to the Eternal Deep.

Who divides form and spirit does violence to the divine order. A poet has said, with keen vision:

“Natural things
And spiritual,—who separates these two
In art, in morals, or the social drift,
Tears up the bonds of nature and brings death.

Without the spiritual
The natural's impossible; — no form,
No motion! Without sensuous, spiritual
Is inappreciable: — no beauty or power!
And in this twofold sphere the twofold man
Holds firmly by the natural, to reach
The spiritual beyond it, — fixes still
The type with mortal vision, to pierce through
With eyes immortal to the antetype
Some call the ideal — better called the real,
And certain to be called so presently,
When things shall have their names.”

The things which do appear are but the expression of the Infinite Spirit that

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throbs and pulses through the universe,
and all the forms that Life wears,
whether in trees or beasts or men, are
but variations of the ceaseless impulse
in the heart of God to publish himself
in visible language. There is no life that
is not God's life, no place which is not
his dwelling-place. "Whither shall I
go from thy spirit? or whither shall I
flee from thy presence? If I ascend in-
to the heavens, thou art there; if I make
my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and
dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there shall thy hand lead me, and
thy right hand shall hold me." The
problem is not to come into touch with
the Infinite, but how to escape from his
presence in a universe that is saturated
with God. For, as one of the great Ger-
man poets says:

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“Das ewig Eine
Lebt mir im Leben, sieht in meinem Sehen.
Nichts ist denn Gott; und Gott ist Nichts
denn Leben.

Gar klar die Hülle sich vor dir erhebet.
Dein Ich ist sie: es sterbe was vernichtbar;
Und fortan lebt nur Gott in deinem Strebem.
Durchschaue was dies Strebem überlebet;
Da wird die Hülle dir als Hülle sichtbar,
Und unverschleiert siehst du göttlich Leben.”

To translate rather freely:

The Eternal ONE
Lives in my life, sees in my perceiving.
Naught is there save God; and God is naught
save Living.
Clear doth the Mask of things stand out
before thee.
It is thy Self; let what is mortal perish,
And thenceforth lives but God in all thy
striving.
Press back and see what shall survive this
Striving;
Then will the Mask of things seem unto
thee but Mask,
And thou shalt view the Life divine with
unveiled vision.

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The secrets of Nature are open secrets. The Infinite Life seeks utterance through a thousand forms. He that hath eyes to see may look in upon God through myriad windows, and he that hath ears to hear may catch the sound of a "moving in the tops of the mulberry trees," and "the voice of many waters." The "glory of the sum of things" flashes along the chords of being, and God fulfils himself in endless ways.

It is in no mere poetic sense that we are all the "children of God." Whatever life we have is a divine life, and, finite though it be, it is part of the Infinite. We live because he lives also. There is nothing strange, then, in God's thought for man. There is no problem, when we cease thinking of ourselves as something apart from God, and come to know that whatever life we have is

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hidden in his. There is no dreary search any more in the darkness for the Door whose key we cannot find, no wistful straining of the eyes before the Veil through which we cannot see. For lo, the Lord is in his holy temple, which temple we are.

Life takes upon itself a quiet dignity and a divine largeness when we view it as an utterance of the Infinite. The least soul of us becomes clothed with an immortal glory when we see ourselves as a broken gleam of the Eternal. And the possibility of man as a spirit born of God is lifted immeasurably above the sordid and the earthly. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he who is our Life shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

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And life gets a comfort from the thought of the indwelling God, the God who is "closer than breathing and nearer than hands or feet." No longer is there any sigh of separation. The kingdom of heaven is within you. The greatness of God is not a thing to be feared any more. It is a thing to rejoice in. For of his fulness do we receive, and grace for grace.

"As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold, I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies;
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me ahold of the greatness of God:
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within

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The range of the marshes, the liberal
marshes of Glynn.

And the sea lends large, as the marsh: lo,
out of his plenty the sea
Pours fast: full soon the time of the flood-
tide must be:
Look how the grace of the sea doth go
About and about through the intricate chan-
nels that flow
 Here and there,
 Everywhere,
Till his waters have flooded the uttermost
 creeks and the low-lying lanes,
And the marsh is meshed with a million
 veins,
That like as with rosy and silvery essences
 flow
 In the rose-and-silver evening glow.
 Farewell, my lord Sun!
The creeks overflow: and a thousand rivu-
 lets run
'Twixt the roots of the sod; and the blades
 of the marsh-grass stir;
Passeth a hurrying sound of wings that
 westward whirr;
Passeth and all is still; and the currents
 cease to run;
And the sea and the marsh are one."

“If a man die, shall he live again?”

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THIS is the problem that frets the world. From the beginning of Time until now, men have stood upon the brink of days, peering into the shadows, looking for a sign, some gleam from out the darkness, that shall still their foolish wondering about it all, and give them an assurance that life persists after this fitful fever has spent itself. What is there beyond this dusty breathing-spell, this bit of a parenthesis between the two Eternities, where we walk our little way, and then, like weary travellers, we lay us down to sleep, the dreamless sleep that knows no waking? Is that the end? To crawl like earth-worms from the sod, to struggle, to suffer, to build our petty plans that never come to full fruition, to dream our dreams that fade before they can be

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realized, and then to die, to creep back into our native mould, life's purpose half-fulfilled,—is that the sad and sordid story of the unnumbered myriads that swarm the earth, a story with a beginning, but no sequel?

We are slaves to our senses. We are lashed to the material world by the five-stranded coil of our sensations. Matter obtrudes itself upon us, until presently we come to think that there is nothing in the universe but the things of sense. Life is the Master. “Visible shapes are only the printed page which is to be read and interpreted.” The universe unfolds by the evolution of Life, not of forms. But we poor dullards mutter and mumble the words of Life's majestic poem, forgetting the thought and the spirit that give them meaning. We live in our eyes and in the ends of our

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fingers; and when the forms that have become familiar to our sight and touch dissolve into their natal dust, when the life that dwelt among us slips off this muddy vestment of decay, then straighway we forget the man, and remember only the poor raiment in which he clothed himself for a season. Because the eye has no vision, and the hands lay hold on no substance, we fall to wondering about life's reality, and to doubting whether, after all, it has a continuance. Is the story done, because the type in which a serial number was printed has been distributed and laid back again in the font? Shall we look for the signs of life's immortality in the mere husk from which the breath has flown? Shall the blind digger in the soil deny the life that poises itself in the summer air, because, forsooth, he has

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found the mouldering larva-shell deserted and no sign therein of its one-time tenant? There is no eternal imperative upon life to utter itself forever through the same material phenomena. Existence is not dependent on some consciousness outside itself. My immortality is not contingent upon your ability to define me in terms of your five senses. Is number born when some scholar's plodding fingers have scrawled upon the board the figures that interpret it, and does it perish when the few chalk-marks are rubbed out again? And the life that seizes a handful of earth to be a moment's alphabet, by which it spells its name in our dull ears and shapes itself before our sodden eyes, is more, infinitely more, than that which makes it tangible and visible; even as the wind is more than the

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"dust that riseth up and is as lightly laid again," showing us for an instant whence it cometh and whither it goeth.

From the very beginning we have gazed so intently upon the accidental and the passing phases of life, that the mystery of it has escaped us. A "vapor that appeareth for a season and then vanisheth away," "waters failing from the sea and the river drying up," "a flower of the field withering under the passing wind"—these are the symbols of life in which our thought, bound by the shackles of materialism, has been trained to move. But the vapor returns to the sea out of whose bosom it came; the waters drop back into the springs whence they issued; and the life that rides forth on the wings of death has only come out from its crumbling palace to build anew in the vigor of Spring.

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By a false analysis we have put asunder what God hath joined together. We have run lines of cleavage between life and death, setting one over against the other as antithetic, making one the antagonist, the enemy, of the other. They are indissoluble parts of one great process of becoming. Perhaps our confusion has arisen from our universal habit of mistaking the mere physical modes of life's manifestations, the bare phenomena that accompany life in certain conditions, with the principle of it. Life is not to be confounded with the forms in which it utters itself, any more than electricity is to be identified with the wire that transmits it or with the carbon points between which the strange force manifests itself in terms of light. We have called that life which is only the signs of its presence. The vital

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spirit tents awhile in flesh and blood; it seizes matter and uses it as its momentary medium of expression; but when the instrument is worn and refuses to serve life's purposes any longer, it casts it aside as useless. Our birth is but the coming of the vital spirit unto its hired tenement, and death is but the going back of the vital spirit into its Father's House. Life and death are not antithetic. They mark the beginning and the end, not of existence, but of a certain mode or manifestation of it. They must be taken together in order to form a complete unity. There can be no life without death. You cannot have one surface without another on the other side. Death is simply the other side of God's good gift of life, which cannot be ignored without losing half the truth. The pendulum must swing backward

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as well as forward, else there is no movement of the hands upon the dial. The shuttle must return upon itself, else there is no weaving. Not life alone, nor death alone, but life and death together, as a rhythmic movement, make up the eternal process of going on.

The tide comes in from the sea, and fills the bays and estuaries full, and then sinks back again into the quiet deeps. So age after age the Life of God moves in on the sleeping worlds, and finds its utterance in the birds of the air, and flowers of the field, and in human hearts.

“The One Spirit’s plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull, dense world; com-
pelling there
All new succession to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks
its flight,
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear,

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And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the
heaven's light."

The great deep of God's life flows in upon the world, and forthwith there spring up everywhere these living things, that serve, for a brief moment, as the media through which the Spirit that filleth all things utters itself. Then comes a day when the sea returns upon itself;

"a tide that moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the bound-
less deep
Turns again home."

The surging Life draws back into itself. The currents run homeward. We call this kindly movement death. It is only the backward sweep of the pendulum, the return of the shuttle, the ebb

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of the tide, the pulse-beat's pause, when
the purple flood runs heartward, the
Prodigal coming back to the Father's
House, after the famine and the stain
and the struggle.

The idea of immortality is not the product of labored reasoning. Man has not toiled to it up the long stairway of logic. It is planted as an instinct at the very foundation of his being. Human life is forever haunted by the unseen presence of another world. A divine imperative compels us to believe what we cannot prove. Where Reason falters, Faith finds her way ; where Sense fails, Hope spreads her glistening pinions.

“O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

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That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.
Behold, we know not anything,
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter turn to spring."

There is an inborn sense of justice in the soul, that stands up in the midst of life's failures and incompletenesses, and demands time and room to finish what it has begun. We seek no heaven of dull satiety, where the soul shall be lost in an insipid ecstasy of adoration, but, with a divine discontent, we claim the glory of going on,—of becoming a part of the everlasting sweep of things. It is Eternal Life that we want, not

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eternal stagnation, and Eternal Life is
an endless becoming.

It is more than a dream, this hope of immortality. There is an answer somewhere to every profound passion of the soul, as there is an answer in Nature to every deep-seated desire of the body. Man is organized for food and Nature gives it, he wants drink and Nature opens her springs to him. For every longing after knowledge she discloses her secrets. To every appetite there is a reality that corresponds to it. George MacDonald set forth a profound philosophy in his little poem addressed to the new-born babe, beginning,

“Where did you come from, baby dear?”
“Out of the everywhere into the here.”

For in a later stanza he asks,
“Where did you get that dear little ear?”
“God spake, and *I came out to hear.*”

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It is the whisper of an unseen world
that awakens in our bosom the long-
ings after immortality, and make us be-
lieve that somewhere the hunger of our
hearts shall be satisfied.

“I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.”

And so we sing the songs of the
Homeland, as we bide our little while;
and we do our work manfully with a
cheerful heart, and we steer into the
dark, unafraid, for God’s stars are there.
The river broadens as it goes down in-
to the West, the waters slip past on their
way to the sheltering Sea, the great,
wide, nameless Sea we dream of,—and
some dread, where all streams find their
resting-place and are still. We hear in

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the evening air the rustle of a sea-bird's wing, and the sound of the surf, far-off and faint, is in our ears,

“As the banks fade dimmer away,
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.”



The Ageless Life



The Shepherd's Question

THE old year is gone. Into the mysterious pattern that is being woven on Time's mighty loom, this little thread of twisted months and days is now forever knotted. Another skein is laid upon our outstretched fingers. A breath or two, a sigh, some laughter, tears, a little toil, and the story of this shred will soon be told. Swiftly the shuttle flies. The hurrying sand counts off the hours of work. The weaver's hands grow weary. The starved wick flickers in its socket. Life's day is done. Night spreads her poppies on the couch. We sleep. Earth claims her own, and the place that knew us shall know us no more.

This petty breathing-time, this inch-worm's span of years, how small it seems, drawn to that scale of universal time in which a thousand years are but

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as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Beside the countless generations of the world, our poor threescore and ten, itself the privilege of few, is like a breath, a moment's glistening of the dew, a violet's fragrance, scattered all too quickly by the wandering winds.

No man can think seriously upon the problems that enmesh us round, without being dazed by the vastness of the Eternal and oppressed by the seeming insignificance of human life. The literature of all ages and of all climes is burdened with one phase or another of this universal experience. The sublime poems that voice the inmost spirit of man, the music that is truly world-music, are written in minor keys. The old Law-giver of Israel, in the dust and heat of the wilderness, where the hosts,

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like crawling things, measured their
laggard course toward Canaan, cried
out as he saw the multitudes yield up
their breath, life's purpose unfulfilled:

“Thou carriest them away as with a flood;
they are as a sleep!
In the morning they are like grass which
groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down and wither-
eth . . .
We bring our years to an end like the
breathing of a sigh.
So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us an heart of wisdom.”

The Shepherd Psalmist, lying there
in the night, with the vastness of the
skies whelming his spirit, stretched his
little life along the Infinite; then, taking
up his trembling harp, he blunted the
key to a minor and sang the brevity of
human life. Job, peering with bloodshot
eyes into the glass of pain, caught there

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a vision of the Almighty, and his puny life became, as it were, a "dust-speck floating in the ether of immensity." Under the same Orient skies, ages afterward, old Khayyam, who "stitched at the tents of wisdom," looking in vain for the "Light amid the Darkness," distilled his soul in song that appeals with a strange power to that subtle pessimism which lingers in us all.

"We are no other than a Moving Row
Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the sun-illumined Lantern
held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show ;
But helpless Pieces of the Game he plays
Upon this Checker-board of Nights and
Days,
Hither and thither moves, and checks,
and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.
The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts
upon

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Turns Ashes — or it prospers ; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty
Face,
Lighting a little Hour or two — was gone.

For some we loved, the loveliest and the
best
That from his Vintage rolling Time has
prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two
before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

And we who now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new
Bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of
Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for
whom?

All down the years, through the sil-
very chimes of joy and the ripple of
laughter, rumbles the somber diapason
of human mortality. “Or ever the sil-
ver chord be loosed, or the golden bowl
be broken, or the pitcher broken at the

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fountain or the wheel broken at the cistern,—then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

To every serious mind there come seasons of reflection, when, in the midst of the constant change, it gropes after something that shall endure the test of time; for something that, in this fluctuating sea of things, shall stand fast. We seek the Ageless, that we may build us a house there, where the years slip past us and leave no trace. For whatever is measured by the flight of time ceases longer to be when time is gone.

“Even as, heavy-curled,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world:
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere.”

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It is the timeless that endures. Upon whatever thing Time has set his mark, that belongs to Time, and shares the fate of Time.

But there are certain things which Time does not concern. The years may come and go, but they stand there unmoved. They wait not on the calendar. They belong to a different world from that in which the watch ticks and the long stretch of years is broken up into seconds by the swinging pendulum. For there are some things that we do not date, and the marks by which men measure time have no place. Love and justice and holiness and truth and beauty are eternal, we say, and we mean just this timelessness; we mean more than that these qualities have always been and always will be; we mean that the years have nothing to do with them, —

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they are timeless. They are bits of God that have gotten tangled in the network of the universe. The mists drift past the mountain peaks and do not alter them; even so do the years drift by, and love and justice remain forever the same. They are ageless. They are eternal,—not because they last so many years, but because they are of such a kind that the years have nothing to do with them; they come not with the years and do not pass with them. The time-element can be ignored, and they suffer no violence.

These are the things that are worth a man's while. They form the warp and the woof of a character that has no more to do with time than have the qualities out of which it is woven. It is as eternal as love, and as lasting as truth. The fate of the world is a mat-

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ter of indifference to a soul like this, for neither "life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate him from the love of God." The man who has builded his life out of the divine forces shares in the divine destiny. Whatever any world may hold for God it holds for him also. There is no line of separation between the Almighty and the soul that believes enough in the divine attributes of love and justice and righteousness and truth to make them a part of himself. He stands, does this man with the divine quality of soul, bedded and rooted in God. Is God eternal? So is he. Does God's life carry through all the changes of the years? So does his. Such a man is submerged in the Di-

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vine, his life is hidden away with God.

The worth of a man cannot be measured by the degree in which the world takes notice of him. How many lives, forever nameless, have faded into the great neutral background, over against which this Age so proudly lifts itself? How many nations have set themselves in the earth and planted their banners on the everlasting hills; have wrought and warred and loved and hated, whose unremembered dust lies thick today upon the sandal-shoon of a heedless and hurrying civilization! Few are there in any age, who are able to carve their name on the granite face of history. For the weary millions, life creeps across its little segment of the years, gasps out a breath or two in God Almighty's sunlight, then vanishes alike from the sight and the remembrance of men.

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A man's life gets its rating from the ideals to which he dedicates himself. A man's value lies in this: that he has seen the face of Duty unveiled, looking at him out of the midst of life, and has dared to follow her alone. To see the Truth, to go forth with her into the night, where there is no trail blazed to guide him, and no light save the burning of his own soul; to give himself to the holy task of making love and justice and righteousness the law of human conduct; to live like a God with only an average man's chance at life,—this is to be of eternal worth to the world. Not in his deeds, but in his fidelity to the best he knows, is the secret of a man's greatness. Deeds do not make a man great. They only show that his greatness has had a chance to utter itself. Opportunities do not make a man

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great. They only unbar the door through which comes forth the greatness that was there all the while in the silent deeps of the man's soul. The root of greatness lies in the great spirit that thinks great thoughts and dreams great dreams, though no chance ever comes to weave that thinking into action, or make those visions concrete in the world of actuality.

Underneath the huge splendor of this twentieth century civilization, and giving to that civilization its broad and enduring foundation, lie the myriads on myriads of men and women, whom no man can number and whose name no man remembers, but because of whose splendid fidelity to so much of love and justice and brotherhood as they knew, all that we possess of worth to-day stands fast as the heritage of the race.

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These are the lives that are eternally worth while, the souls, unhonored and unsung, who were willing to live, and did live, in the dust of their petty treadmill existence, strong, sweet, helpful lives, asking no reward of chattering Fame and no monument save the enduring fruits of their faithfulness.

“The unknown good who rest
In God’s still memory folded deep:
The bravely dumb, who did their deed,
And scorned to blot it with a name.”

The man in this day, or in any day, who grips the little capacities with which his life is endowed; who seizes the thoughts and the forces that come to him, and welds them into crude weapons with which to fight wrong and oppression, to defend the weak, and protect the helpless; the man who feels in his heart the ache of the world’s sorrow,

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and opens his hand wide for the relief of the world's distress; the man who stands everywhere and always for the invisible forces of righteousness and of love, may die at last with few to understand how poor his passing has made the community in which his life was spent, but he has not failed. For he has been building his life out of the things that make God *God*. He has been busy at the work-bench of the Eternal. He is the ageless man.

We are prone to speak of eternal life as if it were some strange thing that a man receives as a gift after this life has loosened its clutch upon him. We are taught to look upon it as an accretion, an addition to the life that exists here, with which a man may robe himself as with a garment. Eternal life is a quality of soul. It is here and now, or it is

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nowhere. Wherever the roots of a man's soul lay hold on the everlasting God, there is the ageless life. It is a human pattern woven on the timeless web of the Divine. The years sweep by uncounted and unheeded. Time has no dominion over it. It belongs to another realm.

It is not necessary that a man should die in order to gain eternal life. Here, amid the dust of our common life and in the trivial round of every day, it can be lived, as well as in heaven. Nay, it must be lived here first, if lived at all. In the midst of the shifting of things, the ebb and flow of time, the coming and going of life in all its myriad forms, the soul can take firm hold upon the eternal verities, which lie deeper than the years, and which, because the years did not bring them when they came,

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they will have no power to take away when they go. For such a soul the changes of time have no terror; the petty measurements of days and months and centuries do not concern it. It is one with "Him that inhabiteth eternity," and shall live on, serene and calm and unperturbed, when

"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

